

2: Henry E-5 (1932-1934) 1941

SM3 Caingang SM3
Aweikoma

SEXUAL RELATIONS AND MARRIAGE

reaching for each other's genitals, but the Kaingáng, although they stand
around holding their own penises, do not hold other men's. 19 838 571 516

In the whole mass of Kaingáng folklore there is one hundred-word story
of a homosexual relationship between two men and another that tells of a
male supernatural that was killed by a man because it sodomized him by
trickery. I never heard a remark that alluded in any way to homosexuality.
The men like to congregate together, and when the women are in camp
they leave them and sit around in groups, weaving baskets or just talking. 571 519
Sometimes a woman may join them because her husband is there, but even
when the men are away the women rarely come together as the men do.
They just visit. Like the indiscriminate playing of the children, these caress-
ings, sleeping parties, and gossipings do not follow relationship lines.
Whatever may be the specific obligations of cousins or brothers-in-law, they
are completely lost sight of in these ephemeral, wholly casual masculine
contacts. The basis for man's loyalty to man has roots in the many warm
bodily contacts between them. The violent, annihilating conflicts among
men in Kaingáng society were all among those who had never shared the
languid exchange of caresses on a hot afternoon under the green arched
shelter of a house nor lain together night after night under a blanket
against the cold. The very transient, unfixated nature of these contacts
leaves no grounds for jealousy. The relationships built on these hours of
lying together with anyone at all bear fruit in the softening of conflicts that
are so characteristic of the Kaingáng. Indeed, there is a patterned friend-
ship between men that has woven this contact into its very warp and woof,
and that is the friendship of hunting companions. Men who have hunted
together day after day, raided the Brazilians together, slept together beside
the same fire, under the same blanket, wrapped in each other's arms, hold
this relationship above their kinship with their brothers. The consequences
for the general integration of Kaingáng society are immeasurable.

The elaborate laws of sexual avoidance that chart the behavior of men 602 ●
and women in many primitive societies, dividing the entire community 835
into the touchables and the untouchables, are undreamt of among the
Kaingáng. Little boys and girls play together in rough and tumble. Brothers
and sisters, brothers- and sisters-in-law and cousins, sleep next to one an-
other, cross legs, or embrace one another. The corollaries to this are the
marriages and love affairs among almost all classes of relatives. Only mar-
riages between parents and children and between full brothers and sisters
are avoided. Marriages between half brothers and sisters are rare.

A complete lack of emphasis on temperamental differences between the 562
sexes permits to boys and girls, men and women, the same jocular and 832
often violent sexual aggressiveness. The term for intercourse may have

42 helpfulness and support, and it is at this point that one of the greatest weaknesses of Kaingáng social structure becomes evident.

602 All of a person's brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, and first and second cousins are his *nungnyén*, and when a man marries, all of his wife's *nungnyén* become his in-laws. It is obvious that the number of any one person's in-laws will be enormous, especially when we consider the fact that he has in-laws not only through his wife but also through his own brothers and sisters and cousins and uncles and aunts. When we remember in addition how closely inbred Kaingáng extended families are it is at once evident that almost all the extended families may be in-laws to any one person. Since it is impossible to give attention to such an enormous number each man selects only a few. Owing to the fact that the lines of his selection are not defined for him, the group with which he throws in his lot is determined only by his own choice, and the character of the group of affinal relatives acknowledged by every individual is different. One man may associate principally with his wife's uncles and brothers, while another may ignore them almost entirely in favor of his sisters' husbands. There is no mechanism to fix and stabilize any kind of relationship. The consequent slighting or exclusion of some relatives and the general fluidity of the social scheme produce undercurrents of resentment that are ultimately drained off substitutively by the feuds.

596 Within the extended family feelings of rejection may be strong but they never break out into bloodshed. Although Vomblé did not see his brother-in-law Tokéle for a long time, all that passed between them when they met was words. "Tokéle used to shoot animals for me," said Vomblé, "but before he died he went away, so that I did not see him. [When I met him again I said to him,] 'I raided the Brazilians, but you went far away and I did not see you after that. I thought that when I went to attack the Brazilians you would follow me, but you did not. I was the companion of your [adoptive] father until he died; then I became angry with you. When your real father was killed³ you were small, and he [the adoptive father] brought you up. At last you grew to manhood, but you went away and you did not see him die. Therefore I was angry with you. I thought to myself, if I were to see you I would be angry with you. *I am telling you this to no purpose.*' Then Tokéle said to me, 'I thought that you would be that way [angry]. When you went away I was going to follow you, but yágn⁴ asked me [to go with him], and so I went with him. That is why I did not see yágn [his adoptive father] die. Are you going to be angry with me on that account?' 'Yes, I am. I went around with your yágn and suffered hunger

³ In a feud.

⁴ His adoptive father's brother who was also his wife's mother's brother and hence a relative by marriage.

the dead.⁷ The only function of the marks is magical. When a person dies⁶¹⁹ all the people around him paint themselves with their marks in order to³⁰² frighten the *kupleng* away. "It sees them and becomes afraid and goes." A widowed person, a *shápeya*, paints himself with marks other than his own^[764] on his return from his period of isolation in order that the *kupleng* may not recognize him. About five years before my arrival a number of people added the circle design to their other marks because when Kemblen died he told all the people to change their marks "so that the *kupleng* would see it and go away."

A number of kinship usages are explained on the basis of the marks. These will be discussed in the section on the kinship system. It is only necessary to say here that all such explanations are purely theoretical and do not support kinship usage.

THE KINSHIP SYSTEM

- (1) *plu*, wife; women with whom a man has had sexual relations; women⁶⁰¹ with marks different from a man, and with whom, therefore, such⁶⁰² relationships are "permissible."
- (2) *mblden*, husband; men with whom a woman has had sexual relations; men with marks different from a woman, and with whom, therefore, such relationships are "permissible."
- (3) *yágn*, father; grandfather; all males much older than Ego;⁸ men who have had relations with Ego's mother.
- (4) *nyó*, mother; grandmother; all females much older than Ego; women who have had relations with Ego's father.
- (5) *nyungnyén*, all blood relatives excepting real parents and grandparents and grandparents' siblings and own children. All members of the same extended family. It is often used specifically for Ego's own brothers, sisters, and first cousins, and for anyone about Ego's own age. In this case the term becomes reciprocal. It may be used also for anyone a little older than Ego. All individuals having the same mark as Ego.
- (6) *yawi*, all people somewhat younger than Ego.
- (7) *yi*, child; all people very much younger than Ego and the children of all the people with whom Ego has had sexual relations.
- (8) *hí*, offspring. Tapirs and dogs have *hí*, but to speak of an animal's *yi* provokes laughter.
- (9) *yémblá*, (plural) *yégnmbld*, all the blood relatives of No. 2 and No. 1. In a more limited sense, all the No. 5 of No. 2 and No. 1 with the

⁷ See fn. 1, p. 175.

⁸ Ego person speaking or spoken about.

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exception of second cousins and their descendants and first cousins once removed and their descendants.

(10) *lānglé*, co-spouse.

(11) *kəkək*, relation. This term is not as strict in its application as No. 5, in that its use may extend outside the extended family. It is used regularly between cousins of all classes, rarely for aunt, never for brother or sister. It is a courtesy term for people not related by blood.

Although the major stress of this system is on relative age the culture actually fails to take cognizance of it in any formal way. In the distribution of food and property, for example, no one age class takes precedence over another. Nor does the principle of relative age play an important role in marriage. Marriage is on the whole between age-mates, although some informants seem to feel that the man should be older than the woman. Leadership is determined by personality factors, by *waikeyú*, not by age.

The term *nyungnyén* expresses the attitudes within the extended families. Its use for blood relatives, combined with its extension to include a much wider group, indicates precisely how the Kaingáng feel about members of the same extended family even when they are not related by blood. Socially they are siblings to one another and the same blood flows in their veins, no matter what the actual conditions are.*

I have frequently pointed out the wide difference in affect between the relationships within the extended families and those that obtain between them. Since, therefore, the terms *nyungnyén*, *yavi*, *yi*, and *kík* are used almost exclusively for members of the same extended family it follows that they express a considerable amount of in-group affect. Since, also, the extended families are intensely inbred and the general sibling feeling is strong, there is a correlation here with the fact that the kinship system completely ignores questions of specific relationship. Since the kinship terms at the most, therefore, express only generalized blood relationship the most important correlations in the Kaingáng kinship system are with age pure and simple, and with the affect associated with the in-group.

In Chapter VII I pointed out that the Kaingáng do not keep to the theoretical formulation of their affinal relationships but that each man selects particular individuals for attention. Hand in hand with this goes the fact that although for all the Kaingáng the category of affinity¹⁰ is the same each person uses the term *yómbil* in everyday life for a different

*An excellent example of this can be found on p. 122. Although Wanyeki and Kuvin were not blood relatives of Kái they were his *nyungnyén* because they came from the same extended family.

¹⁰ Relationship by marriage.

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group of affinities. There is an additional variability in the use of this term⁶⁰¹ due to the fact that some individuals prefer to use the age term series⁶⁰² rather than *yómbld*. Although some people are singled out as affinal relatives toward whom Ego has specific obligations he might never call them *yómbld*, preferring instead to use the age terms.

The significance of terms 1, 2, and 8 has been discussed in Chapter III, and the further implications of 3 have also been discussed in that chapter.

[p. 180 is blank]